

blocking the exit with his huge bulk. His yellow, apelike teeth showed again. "Y' don't sloop away from me like dat! I'm yer boss now—see? I need a Chink like you to cook me slum and do me woik while I loaf around like a toff."

"You crazy! I go!" cried Bung, beginning to raise his voice.

"None o' yer fluff now!" grunted Mike, doubling his great paw under Bung's affrighted nose. "If y' squeal I'll croak ye!"

Being of an unwarlike race, Bung was bravest in retreat. Giving tongue to a Cantonese college yell, he suddenly lowered his head and collided with Mike amidstships, a disastrous move, for a moment later the gigantic tramp had clutched the Chinaman by the slack of his breeches and was shaking him, head down, like a sack of wheat. And, like a shaken sack, Bung gave up his treasures. First his store of hand-rolled cigarettes slid from his pockets, then something bright and golden which clinked upon the pebbles and lay shining by the fire.

"Kale!" exclaimed the tramp, and every tramp knows "kale" means "money." "A yellow boy!" He picked up the ten-dollar piece and put it in his pocket. "Say, got any more?"

"Ah, nope, Mist' Hobo—I got no mo'! I velly poor!"

"Quicher kiddin'!" said Mike, again reversing Bung and shaking him hopefully, as though he had been the purse of Fortunatus, capable of giving up coins indefinitely. The exercise being somewhat too violent for one of Mike's temperament, he soon desisted and set Bung down upon the sand. Puffing from his exertions, the tramp also sat down.

"Ye're a proper stiff," said the hobo contemptuously, "tryin' to beat it from your pal! T'ink I'm goin' to let yez hike all over de country snitchin' on what I told yez? Nix, Chino! Ye travel wit' me for awhile—see? Some day, when we're flickin' a ride off'n de railroad, I'll shove yez out on de Mojave desert an' let y' walk home."

BUNG, thoroughly subdued, resumed his poker face and thought hard. It was evident to him that the tramp, aside from fancying the idea of having a Chinaman to cook for and wait upon him, had another motive in keeping him captive. He had been talking indiscreetly of his crimes in the Santa Clara Valley, and he no doubt realized that Bung would at once spread the alarm, should he escape. In the words of the villain in the thirty-cent melodrama, Bung "knew too much."

"Where d'ye come from?" asked Mike, as soon as he recovered his breath.

"Sacramento," lied Bung promptly.

"Know any henroosts round here?" inquired the tramp.

"I sabe one," said Bung, jumping at a sudden inspiration. "You like me show you?"

"On de level?"

"Oh, velly lebel—look-see!" Bung plucked Mike by the sleeve and led him to the top of the bridge, where the lights of the Oliver ranch were fully in view.

"Yest'day," said Bung, "I walkee-walkee through that place. What I see there?"

"Cough up!" commanded the hobo.

"Chickee!" whispered Bung dramatically.

"Lots of 'em?"

"Oh, two, three, hunder. Heap fat, heap happy chickees."

"Gee!" muttered the hen pirate, rising to the bait as Captain Kidd might have done to the lure of treasure ships. "Two or three hundred!"

"Plenty heaps!" exclaimed Bung, indicating by a gesture broad acres of clucking beauties. "Mucchee many! Shanghai, Plymly Rock, Leggyhorn—all kind chickee! Heap big, heap soft! Um!" He made a mouth suggestive of divine fricassee.

The big tramp looked long and lovingly at the yellow lights in the adjacent farm.

"Mikee," said Bung with an expression of infinite cunning, "you likee me show you them chickee?"

BUNG'S vacation was the topic of the evening when the Olivers were gathered round the lamp in the main room.

"I wonder did he get a good place to sleep tonight?" mused Mrs. Oliver, who was embroidering Persian designs on Irish linen.

"He's probably in San José at this moment showing the Mayor of Chinatown how to draw four aces with both hands above the table," said Tommy, looking up from a pink envelop in the handwriting of Cecilia Thorne.

"If he's going to be a hobo, as he threatened to be," said Judge Oliver from his Morris chair, "I hope the red gods whistle him back before the end of next week."

"Bet you four bits to two he'll be back in two days!" said Maude, the frivolous blond sister.

"Daughter, where do you get those dreadful expressions?" asked the mother, shocked.

"Teddy Barnum," said Maude, mentioning a sporting Stanford junior.

"I'll take you up on that bet," said Tommy.

"Bung won't be back for a week."

"Even money?" asked Maude.

"Dollar even," drawled Tommy like a man of the world.

"Children, dear!" exclaimed Mrs. Oliver.

At ten o'clock the family began straggling off to bed. By ten-thirty the Judge had finished his chapter of Huxley, emptied his pipe, and proceeded to bolt the front door. By ten-forty-five the last light was out and the Olivers were cuddled quietly under the snug robe of King Morpheus.

SQUAWK! Squaw-aw-aw-aw-aw! Kiddy-ke-dack! Ke-dack! Ke-dack! Gar-r-r-r-r! Awk! Ouch! Lemme out, ye dummy! Wassamalla you? Murder! Kiddy-ke-dack!

This medley of horrors alarmed the Olivers' dreams and brought every member of the family tumbling out of bed.

Bearing shotguns, appeared on the porch Judge Oliver in scant cotton nightshirt and Tommy in rich pongee pajamas. From the upper windows of the house there blossomed three female faces,—Mrs. Oliver, her gray hair sternly braided; Gertrude, bristling with patent curlers; Maude, wearing a lacy cap of frivolous pattern.

On the strip of lawn beside the house a plump figure danced wildly, throwing its fingers to the moon.

"No shootee, no shootee!" it jabbered when the two men leveled their guns. "I no burgly-man! No shootee!"

"Bung!" exclaimed five assorted voices in one breath.

A fearful squawking, roaring, and pounding again issued from the sheds behind the barn.

"Come chop-chop pletty quick I catchee!" exclaimed Bung, waddling duck fashion ahead of his astonished masters round the barn to the chicken coop. The door of that edifice shook as with human rage; but refused to open for the evident reason that a large iron spike was driven through the staple. A terrific basso cursing rose like a solo above the frenzied hen chorus.

"What have you got in there?" asked Tommy, cocking his gun.

"I catchee Pige Mikee! He steal um chickee!" yelled Bung, dancing in a circle.

"Open the door!" commanded the Judge sternly, assuming the pose of a Minute Man.

"He heap mad hobo!" warned Bung, fumbling nervously with the spike that held the prisoner. No sooner was the hasp released than the door flew open, landing Bung such a mighty clout that he turned a complete reverse somersault and lay kicking like a stricken beetle. And the hobo came out. He came out with a roar in his voice and a six-foot henroost in his hand. He let out the roar and the roost at the same moment; but Tommy deftly tripped him before anything serious occurred, and Judge Oliver menaced him with a double-barreled fowling piece (unloaded).

"Aw, Mister, don't send me to de jug! I ain't no tramp hook—I'm a poor woikin' guy—honest, I'm starvin'!" whined Mike, putting up the "mocking spiel" that has saved many a tramp from vengeance.

"You no b'lieve him, Judge Olivah—he no workee guy—he velly mean hobo—he steal um all time!" clamored Bung in the Judge's other ear.

Bung enthusiastically fetched a coil of clothesline from the shed. While the Judge held his empty gun at the tramp's head, Tommy tied him hand and foot. Bung's encouragement was heartening to hear.

"Oh, tie him plenty—I go fetchee more lope!" he cried gleefully. "Please no tie him too loose!"

"Dry up, ye proper stiff!" snarled the hobo, giving utterance to the tramp's deepest phrase of contempt, meaning "man who works when he isn't forced to."

LESS than an hour later Bung squatted in the moonlight watching the town marshal bearing away the petty vagrant in a green wagon. The Chinaman's face beamed more blandly than the moon. The Judge and Tommy, now dressed as to shoes and trousers, accosted their smiling servant.

"You can go now, Bung, and finish your vacation," smiled the Judge.

"No go. I catch um plenty."

"Didn't you like it?"

"Nope. Too far off—too lonesome."

"Where did you go?"

Bung pointed to the little bridge, less than a city block off the Oliver acres.

"I no likee v'lacation," said Bung disgustedly. "He too mucchee work all time."

The Chinaman shuffled away toward his hut of crazy lumber, the home where his heart was. As the two white men entered the house to finish their broken sleep, Maude called down from upstairs:

"Tommy," she said, "don't forget in the morning you owe me a dollar!"



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